



(Daily InterLake) Asbestos patients now eligible for pilot program_June 14, 2011

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Asbestos patients now eligible for pilot program - Daily Inter Lake: Local/Montana

Asbestos patients now eligible for pilot program

Daily Inter Lake | Posted: Tuesday, June 14, 2011 2:00 am

Patients in Lincoln and Flathead County with asbestos-related diseases acquired in the Libby area now are eligible to receive additional benefits from a new pilot program announced Monday by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Due to asbestos exposure over several decades from the former W.R. Grace & Co. vermiculite mine, the federal government declared Libby a public health emergency in 2009. People who acquired diseases from that hazard became eligible for Medicare under a provision of the Affordable Care Act.

Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., pushed for special dispensation in the federal health-reform bill to help Libby asbestos victims. The pilot program is the third step in Baucus' efforts to secure health-care coverage for Libby victims.

In spring 2010, victims linked to Libby asbestos exposure began getting care under Medicare. In March this year Baucus announced a grant program to help Lincoln County health-care providers screen for asbestos-related disease.

The pilot program scheduled to begin July 1 replaces the additional benefits previously provided by temporary grant programs from the state and the federal Department of Health Resources and Services Administration.

It covers services normally not covered by Medicare, which include:

- n Special home-care services
- n Special medical equipment
- n Help with travel to get care
- n Special counseling such as help to quit smoking
- n Nutritional supplements
- n Prescription drugs not covered by Medicare drug plans if the participant is in a Medicare drug plan.

Patients who take part in the pilot program will be able to work with a nurse case manager to coordinate their health benefits and ensure cost-effective care.

To qualify for the pilot program, patients must qualify for Medicare under the environmental health hazards provision of the Affordable Care Act, live in Lincoln or Flathead counties and have Medicare Part A and Part B.

Noridian Administration Services, which will run the program for Medicare, has scheduled information sessions to explain how to enroll and help asbestos victims determine if they qualify.

In Libby, sessions will be held at 8 a.m., 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. on June 21 and 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. June 22 at the City Hall Ponderosa Room, 952 E. Spruce Street.

In Kalispell, an information session is planned at 8 a.m. June 23 at the Museum at Central School, 124 Second Ave. E.

Bring your Medicare card and any other current insurance information.

To enroll, patients may call 1-888-469-9464 or visit www.noridianmedicare.com.

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